

## Reading for Information



Use with *Macbeth*,  
page 348.



**READING 9A** Summarize a text in a manner that captures the author's viewpoint, its main ideas, and its elements without taking a position or expressing an opinion. **9B** Explain how authors writing on the same issue reached different conclusions because of differences in assumptions, evidence, reasoning, and viewpoints. **9D** Synthesize ideas and make logical connections among multiple texts representing similar or different genres and technical sources and support those findings with textual evidence.

## The Real Macbeth

- Historical Account, page 435
- Newspaper Article, page 437

When William Shakespeare wrote “the Scottish play,” he based the plot, characters, and setting on details in Raphael Holinshed’s historical account *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, published in 1587. Now you will read directly from this source of information and then look at a contemporary article by Julie Traves about the real Macbeth.

## Skill Focus: Take Notes and Synthesize

When you synthesize ideas from different sources, you compare and combine the ideas to gain a better understanding of a subject. For example, Holinshed and Traves suggest very different things about who Macbeth really was. By synthesizing their ideas, we can begin to evaluate the accuracy of Shakespeare’s portrayal of this Scottish king.

In order to compare these texts, it may be helpful to take notes about each work and then use those notes to summarize your findings. This process of gathering and organizing information can help you uncover the key relationships and patterns in each work. Use a chart like the one shown to take notes from each selection, or create a different chart that works better for you.

Source	Important Details and Ideas About Macbeth
“Duncan’s Murder” from <i>Holinshed’s Chronicles</i>	
“Banquo’s Murder” from <i>Holinshed’s Chronicles</i>	
“Out, Damn Slander, Out” paragraphs 1 and 2	

First read *Holinshed’s Chronicles*. Then, from each subsection, gather key details about Macbeth and list them in your chart. You will use these details to summarize the author’s viewpoint. Organize the key details into brief summaries about how Macbeth is portrayed in each subsection. Use no more than a few sentences for each summary. Then combine these sentences to create a brief overall summary that describes the author’s viewpoint about Macbeth. Follow the same process for Traves’s newspaper article.

Finally, compare your summaries. What are the major similarities and differences in the way these authors view Macbeth?

from *Holinshed's Chronicles*

by Raphael Holinshed

## Duncan's Murder

It fortune'd, as Macbeth and Banquo journeyed toward Forres, where the King then lay, they went sporting by the way together without other company save only themselves, passing through the woods and fields, when suddenly, in midst of a laund,<sup>1</sup> there met them three women in strange and wild apparel, resembling creatures of elder<sup>2</sup> world; whom when they attentively beheld, wondering much at the sight, the first of them spoke and said, "All hail, Macbeth, Thane of Glamis!" (for he had lately entered into that dignity and office by the death of his father Sinel). The second of them said, "Hail, Macbeth, Thane of Cawdor!" But the third said, "All hail, Macbeth, that hereafter shalt be King of Scotland!" **A**

<sup>10</sup> Then Banquo. "What manner of women," saith he, "are you, that seem so little favorable unto me, whereas to my fellow here, besides high offices, ye assign also the kingdom, appointing forth nothing for me at all?" "Yes," saith the first of them, "we promise greater benefits unto thee than unto him, for he shall reign indeed, but with an unlucky end; neither shall he leave any issue behind him to succeed in his place, where contrarily thou indeed shalt not reign at all, but of thee those shall be born which shall govern the Scottish kingdom by long order of continual descent." Herewith the foresaid women vanished immediately out of their sight. . . . Shortly after, the Thane of Cawdor being condemned at Forres of treason against the King committed, his lands, livings, and offices were given of the King's liberality to Macbeth. . . . **B**

<sup>20</sup> Shortly after it chanced that King Duncan, having two sons by his wife (which was the daughter of Siward Earl of Northumberland), he made the elder of them (called Malcolm) Prince of Cumberland, as it were thereby to appoint him his successor in the kingdom immediately after his decease. Macbeth, sore troubled herewith, for that he saw by this means his hope sore hindered . . . he began to take counsel how he might

1. laund: glade.

2. elder: ancient.

### **A TAKE NOTES**

According to Holinshed, whom did Macbeth and Banquo encounter on their way to Forres? What did the comments made to Macbeth suggest about his future?

### **B TAKE NOTES**

Reread lines 17–19. Why was this event significant? Record the event and its significance in your notes.

### C TAKE NOTES

Identify Macbeth's action in lines 31–33. What and/or who motivated him to commit this act? Explain.

### Language Coach

**Formal Language** The formal language of historical and other academic texts is different from everyday language. Lines 34–35 contain two formal-sounding adverbs. The first, *but* (usually a conjunction, like *and*) means “only.” The other, *thereby*, means “in that way.” Say these lines more informally.

### D TAKE NOTES

What did Macbeth hire men to do? Why? Reread lines 36–41 to identify his motives.

### E TAKE NOTES

What did Fleance do? Why? Add this information to your notes.

usurp the kingdom by force, having a just quarrel<sup>3</sup> so to do (as he took the matter), for that Duncan did what in him lay to defraud him of all manner of title and claim which he might, in time to come, pretend<sup>4</sup> unto the crown.

The words of the three Weird Sisters also (of whom before ye have heard) greatly encouraged him hereunto; but specially his wife lay sore upon him<sup>5</sup> to attempt the thing, 30 as she that was very ambitious, burning in unquenchable desire to bear the name of a queen. At length, therefore, communicating his purposed intent with his trusty friends, amongst whom Banquo was the chiefest, upon confidence of their promised aid he slew the King at Inverness or (as some say) at Bothgowanan, in the sixth year of his reign. C



## Banquo's Murder

This was but a counterfeit zeal of equity<sup>6</sup> showed by him, partly against his natural inclination, to purchase thereby the favor of the people. Shortly after, he began to show what he was, instead of equity practicing cruelty. For the prick of conscience (as it chanceth ever in tyrants and such as attain to any estate by unrighteous means) caused him ever to fear lest he should be served of the same cup as he had ministered to his predecessor. The words also of the three Weird Sisters would not out of his mind, which 40 as they promised him the kingdom, so likewise did they promise it at the same time unto the posterity of Banquo. He willed therefore the same Banquo, with his son named Fleance, to come to a supper that he had prepared for them; which was indeed, as he had devised, present death at the hands of certain murderers whom he hired to execute that deed, appointing them to meet with the same Banquo and his son without the palace, as they returned to their lodgings, and there to slay them, so that he would not have his house slandered but that in time to come he might clear himself if anything were laid to his charge upon any suspicion that might arise. D

It chanced by the benefit of the dark night that, though the father were slain, yet the son, by the help of almighty God reserving him to better fortune, escaped that danger; 50 and afterward, having some inkling (by the admonition of some friends which he had in the court) how his life was sought no less than his father's, who was slain not by chance-medley<sup>7</sup> (as by the handling of the matter Macbeth would have had it to appear) but even upon a premeditated<sup>8</sup> device, whereupon to avoid further peril he fled into Wales. E

3. **quarrel:** cause.

4. **pretend:** claim.

5. **lay sore upon him:** pressed him hard.

6. **equity:** fairness.

7. **chance-medley:** accidental homicide.

8. **premeditated:** premeditated.



## Travel Section

# Out, Damn Slander, Out

Julie Traves

On the 1,000th anniversary of Macbeth's birth, 20 members of the Scottish Parliament are trying to restore his honor—while at the same time boosting tourism. After all, the former king's influence, fictitious or otherwise, is widely felt across the landscape and landmarks of Scotland, from the castle he ruled in “the Scottish play” to the Iron Age hill fort where he reputedly met  
10 his demise.

A motion was put forward this year that “regrets the fact that Macbeth was

misportrayed in the play by Shakespeare of that name,” and notes the historical connections Macbeth had to locations all over Scotland. . . . Since the first performance of *Macbeth* nearly 500 years ago, the Scottish leader has been known as a faithless killer spurred on by witches and a “fiend-like queen.” As scholar Frank Kermode writes in his introduction to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, “In no other play does Shakespeare show a nation so cruelly occupied by the powers of darkness.”

(continued)

## Language Coach

### Frequently Misused

**Words** *Fictitious* and *fictional* are so similar in sound and meaning that they are easily confused. *Fictional* means “relating to imaginative writing,” as in “fictional hero.” *Fictitious* (line 5) means “fake” or “imaginary.” Which word has more negative associations, or connotations?



Glamis castle in Angus, Scotland—a famous Scottish castle, referred to by Shakespeare as Macbeth's home



**F TAKE NOTES**

So far, what new information about Macbeth has Julie Traves presented? Record this information in your notes.

**G TAKE NOTES**

Reread lines 35–47. According to the author, in what ways does Shakespeare manipulate Holinshed's details? Why did he change the story? Include these points in your notes.

In fact, the real Macbeth had a remarkably harmonious reign from 1040 to 1057. He is credited with spreading Christianity throughout Scotland, which prospered under his rule. In a recent interview with  
 30 the *Daily Telegraph*, historian Ted Cowan of Glasgow University said that “some of the ancient Highland clans looked to Macbeth as the last great Celtic ruler in Scotland.” . . . **F**

The Bard based *Macbeth* on Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, published in 1577. While this historical tract doesn't mention Macbeth's betrayal of Duncan, it does refer  
 40 to the killer of an earlier Scots king who was also urged on by his wife. This material was applied to *Macbeth*, in part, to comment on how ambition can go awry. The story of Macbeth was also altered as a way to pay tribute to—and legitimize—  
 50 Scottish King James VI's rise to the English throne in 1603. **G**

These days, however, when people think of Macbeth, they don't think of royal

ancestry—or real history, for that matter. Most of the 120,000 visitors that go to Glamis Castle each year “make the link with Shakespeare,” according to the castle's business manager Gill Crawford. And Glamis plays up that link: There was a performance of *Macbeth* on the grounds last year, and corporate groups can hire a Lady Macbeth to give the “out damn spot” speech (a message to striving  
 60 executives, perhaps?). . . .

Bill Jameson, a writer for the *Scotsman* newspaper, doubts whether tourists want to see monuments to a goody-goody king at all. He writes: “What draws visitors is the mystery of malevolence, and the wish to see the settings of great murders and misdemeanors.”

And what do Scots themselves make of all this toil and trouble? Douglas Pattullo, a  
 70 parliamentary assistant, said that once the public learned that Macbeth was not “the baddie of history,” they were mostly in favor of burnishing his image. . . .



*Macbeth, Banquo, and the Three Witches.* English School. Woodcut. Private collection. © Bridgeman Art Library.

## Comprehension

1. **Recall** According to Holinshed, what were Macbeth's motives for killing Duncan? for attempting to have Banquo and Fleance killed?
2. **Recall** What were 20 members of the Scottish Parliament trying to do on the 1,000th anniversary of Macbeth's birth?
3. **Summarize** Describe the real Macbeth according to author Julie Traves.

## Critical Analysis

4. **Analyze Allusion** Consider the title "Out, Damn Slander, Out." What is Traves alluding to? What point is she making about Macbeth's reputation? Explain.
5. **Reflect on Your Notes** Suppose that Shakespeare had chosen to portray a more historically accurate Macbeth. Do you think he still would have managed to write an interesting play with a more virtuous protagonist? Explain.



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## Read for Information: Synthesize

### WRITING PROMPT

Briefly discuss how Holinshed's negative portrayal of Macbeth differs from Traves's positive one. If Shakespeare had based his play on Traves's historically accurate, positive Macbeth instead of Holinshed's version, how would the play have changed? Do you think audiences would prefer to see a play about the positive Macbeth rather than the negative one? Why or why not? Include specific evidence from Holinshed, Traves, and Shakespeare's play in your essay.

To answer the prompt, you will synthesize information from the texts in this lesson and from Shakespeare's play. Follow these steps:

1. Gather specific information about the portrayal of Macbeth in Holinshed's and Traves's writings. Use this information to summarize each author's viewpoint so you can identify the essential differences between them.
2. Review the materials on Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (pages 340–341) and make notes about Macbeth as portrayed in the play.
3. Write down a few thoughts about why people take interest in a dramatic or historical character and how they might respond to the different portrayals of the Scottish king.

